

March 13, 2007

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WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon announced today the first full draft of the Iraq Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill includes funding for a number of hurricane relief and recovery needs he had requested from House appropriators. The Emergency Supplemental will be voted on by the full House Appropriations Committee later this week and could reach the floor of the House of Representatives as early as next week.

"Our recovery and rebuilding needs in south Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf Coast are critical and merit being included in an emergency funding bill," said Rep. Melancon. **"Over a year and a half has passed since Katrina and Rita tore through our homes and communities, and we are still struggling to get back on our feet and prepare for the next storm. This Emergency Supplemental bill recognizes the urgency of our needs in south Louisiana and I thank Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Whip Jim Clyburn, Appropriations Chairman David Obey, and other members of the leadership for making Katrina/Rita recovery a major priority when drafting this bill."**

House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn added, "Thanks to the leadership of Charlie Melancon and our Gulf Coast members, and their coordination with our Democratic Committee Chairman, the House of Representatives is moving quickly to bring assistance to the region. It took eighteen months after the hurricanes hit, and a Congress willing to act, but we're finally providing the means and resources to our fellow Americans to rebuild and recover."

Among the needs Rep. Melancon had called for that are included in the supplemental are: funding for additional agriculture and fisheries disaster relief, funding construction of the levee protection system on both the east and west bank in New Orleans and surrounding parishes, money for K-12 teacher recruitment and higher education assistance, the extension of a federal grant program for critically needed social services, and billions in funding for FEMA disaster recovery grants, with no local or state match required. Also included in the supplemental is language forgiving all community disaster loans, an initiative Rep. Melancon has been working on with House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn and other Member of Congress from the Gulf Coast.

Specifically, the Emergency Supplemental includes the following funding priorities for Gulf Coast recovery:

- **\$260 million for agriculture and fisheries disaster assistance** for all 2005 hurricane affected areas. This includes:
 - \$120 million for fisheries relief. A significant portion of this funding will go to Louisiana for direct relief for the shrimp and menhaden industries, surveying, and debris removal along traditional fishing grounds.
 - \$100 million for citrus disaster assistance
 - \$25 million for livestock disaster assistance
 - \$15 million for rice saltwater intrusion disaster assistance

- **\$1.3 billion for east and west bank levee protection** system in New Orleans and surrounding parishes.

- **\$30 million for K-12 education recruitment assistance** (similar to Miller-Melancon RENEWAAL Act introduced in early March)

- **\$30 million for higher education assistance** (similar to Miller-Melancon RENEWAAL Act introduced in early March)

- **Extension of FEMA utility subsidy program for essential parish employees** (identical to H.R. 858, which Rep. Melancon introduced in early February). Will extend for one more year FEMA's authority to reimburse parish governments for the cost of paying utility bills for essential government employees still working and living in temporary housing (i.e., FEMA trailers). Devastated parish governments have used this program as an incentive to encourage essential employees, such as law enforcement officers, to stay in the community and continue working for the parish.

- **Community Disaster Loan forgiveness.** (similar to language in the Hurricane Katrina and Rita Federal Match Relief Act of 2007 introduced by Majority Whip Clyburn, Rep. Melancon, and other members of the Gulf Coast delegation in February).

- **\$4.3 billion for FEMA disaster recovery grants.** The state and local match for these grants will be waived, meaning the federal government will finance 100% of the grants.

- **Social Services Block Grant extension.** SSBG grants will be available for hurricane-affected areas along the Gulf Coast for an extra year, until September 30, 2008. Rep. Melancon is working to alter the language so that SSBG funding is extended even further - September 30, 2010 - before the final supplemental bill is passed. SSBG funding provides critically needed social services including programs for mental health, child welfare, and the treatment of addictive disorders.

- **Extension of education waiver** (identical to H.R. 1262, which Rep. Melancon introduced in early March). Will extend a federal waiver for one more year - until September 30, 2008 - that gives school districts impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita more flexibility in drawing down and utilizing federal money for recovery efforts. Specifically, the waiver will allow schools to continue to use state money for the 10% local match required by FEMA in order for them to be eligible for the 90% federal reimbursement for recovery projects. The bill will also allow school districts to use federal funds appropriated by Congress in the Defense/Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill (H.R. 2863) to pay for expenses state money would normally be used for, such as teachers' salaries and school operational needs. Last fall, Rep. Melancon was an original co-sponsor of successful legislation that extended the waiver until September 30th, 2007.

- **\$25 million for Small Business Administration disaster loans.**

- **\$80 million for HUD tenant-based rental assistance.**

- **\$10 million for HUD and FEMA Inspector General offices**, to increase scrutiny of hurricane recovery dollars.

Rep. Melancon added, "Those of us from the Gulf Coast who lived through Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are ever aware of the approaching hurricane season, which begins in less than two and a half months. Last year we dodged the bullet, but we might not be so lucky this year and have to be prepared for the worst. I am very pleased this supplemental provides over a billion dollars for levees in south Louisiana and I will keep working in Congress until all of our people and communities are protected by a comprehensive hurricane and flood protection system. "

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